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ABSTRACT

People are steadily being deprived of decision making opportunities. However, the freedom and sense of adventure to be found in the outdoors can help renew feelings of self-direction in our lives. Many theories about the nature of self have been evolved since Aristotle's time. Social benefits, self conceptualization and self assessment may all result from the study of self. Outdoor education relates to self concept in its use of the natural environment as a laboratory to provide opportunities for educational growth through direct experiences and "real" discoveries. Resident camps can offer new social experiences as well as educational opportunities. A 1978 study of 60 seventh graders who attended a 5 day outdoor education camp and were tested before and after the experience indicated that although most showed no significant change, 3 students showed considerable growth in self concept. The element of risk involved in adventure programs can also be an effective catalyst for enhancing self concept. Programs like Outward Bound and Homeward Bound have been used as effective alternatives to traditional treatment programs for delinquents by helping develop positive self concepts. Outdoor adventure programs for adults, some corporation-sponsored, have been successful in encouraging leadership and self-confidence. (JD)

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Adventure Deprivation - A Social Disease
Self Concept Through School Camp

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Last March I received a letter in the mail from the National Outdoor Education Conference Program Planning Committee. Just that alone impressed me. The letter went on to say that they had been given my name as a possible presenter and suggested that I consider the following topic: "Development of Self Concept Through School Camping." Well, I considered it, and decided that that title was a little drab, so I've renamed this presentation and called it "Adventure Deprivation - A Social Disease." Now - that has a little more flair to it! The topic is still basically the same, but the title jazzes it up a bit.

What I'm going to try to do now is ease into the topic; however, it's almost impossible to ease into discussing self-concept and outdoor education, let alone adventure. Although all three play an integral part with one another, maybe it would be best to spend a little time and discuss each one separately - before attempting to write them. All three concepts can encompass so many different things, that perhaps laying a bit of a foundation for each will help to focus on the central theme of this discussion that we, as a people, are being steadily deprived of decision making opportunities. We're constantly finding new ways to protect ourselves from any form of confrontation or even moderately unsafe situations, and as a result, we've removed many feelings of self-direction from our lives. We obey all the rules, follow the proper format, adhere to company policy, attempt to conform to social constraints and lose a lot of our identity in the process. The out of doors isn't an automatic panacea to all of society's woes - but it can help. The freedom and sense of adventure that accompany a weekend of backpacking often lingers into the rest of the week. Even a tramp through the woods in an afternoon can offer a much needed spiritual renewal.

Outdoor education and adventure have some basic components which can enhance everyone's feeling of well being. And that is what this discussion is going to be all about.

First, an attempt to come to grips with self-concept. What is it and how are we affected by it? Why bother studying it? These questions are certainly a lot easier to ask then to answer. Historically, the concept of self has been around for quite a while. Aristotle is recorded as having made the distinction between physical and what he called non-physical aspects of a human being. Although the non-physical was never fully explained, it came to be thought of as the core - or the self. This thought slowly evolved into something referred to as the soul and later, the soul was placed under the jurisdiction of religion. These two concepts were tossed around for awhile, and it wasn't until about 2000 years later that a gentleman by the name of Descartes elaborated on those ideas to the point that he ventured the statement - "I think, therefore I am." The reasoning behind this statement challenged thinkers for centuries.[8]

The foundations for psychological thought in the late 1800's were laid by Humes, Berkley, Hobbes and James and John Stuart. These men wrestled with the problems of the nature of human experience, the distinction between mind and body. They tried to understand the existence of the mind and the nature of experiencing oneself.[8]

Early psychology perceived self as being introspective in nature. Self was considered largely a person's experiences of himself. However, at the turn of the 20th Century, William James expanded upon the concept of self to the extent that it no longer was restricted to a totally internal concept. James theorized that self was comprised of 3 categories. The bodily self was one aspect. It

was referred to as the "Material Me". James believed that a person experienced not only his material body - but external possessions as well - his home, his family and other objects he surrounded himself with. The second aspect of self was called the "Social Me". This category included the person's awareness of his reputation or how others viewed him. The third category was the "Spiritual Me" - this was more vague, but generally alluded to an individual's perception of his own mental processes - his awareness of how he thought or felt.[8]

Over the next 3 decades, the study of self continued to attract attention and grow in importance. A sociologist by the name of Charles Horton Cooley strongly advocated that there was an important connection between the self and the social environment. He believed that a person's feelings about himself were based largely upon his relations with others. This thought was elaborated on by George Herbert Mead who believed that "a person's view of self is a product of the social environment."[8]

During the 1920's the theories of self came into question - people began to demand concrete data. The behaviorists began to come to the forefront. Their statistics lent credence and respectability to what had previously been a theory based on philosophy. Behaviorists enabled psychology to come to be respected as a science. However, as more indepth research was attempted, it became apparant that not all behaviors were a result of external reinforcement. Something was happening on the inside which enabled the subject to successfully complete the task. Gradually, it became apparent that the behaviorists and theorists could compliment one another. The behaviorists could use the theories postulated by the self-psychologists as a foundation

for data gathered through experimentation. This merger occured in the 1930's and 40's and became a partial foundation for the current and continuing study's which attempt to define the self and all of it's components.[8]

As we watch the growth and development of the study of self, we're forced to realize that most of the people associated with that pursuit came to be respected as wise and intelligent individuals. It's therefore probably safe to assume that these people saw value in what they were doing. It's the value that can be derived from the study of self that is important to us as educators, and as people. For brevity sake, only three basic values will be discussed. One value involves social benefits. If a person is not pleased with the way people respond to him, he can, through his ability to perceive self and acquire self knowledge, analyze what it is that he does which is not pleasing to others. He then can utilize that knowledge to change his behavior and thus acquire acceptance among his peers. A second value would be that of self conceptualization. This involves a person's ability to make lasting generalizations about themselves. As a person gains lasting knowledge of various aspects of self, they need not undergo constant re-learning. This in turn allows them to continuously acquire new self knowledge while using the previously acquired self knowledge as a foundation. A third value would be the ability to make a self assessment by identifying and categorizing personal characteristics and then as a result of this self analysis, be able to communicate information of self to others. Through these methods, a

person acquires an identity.[8]

Although the discussion of self concept could continue for a good while longer, it's important at this time to begin a summary of what has been presented and attempt to relate those findings to Outdoor Education. A summary of the attributes of self concept would be:

1) self knowledge is acquired in at least three different manners:
   - internal awareness of self-feeling and thinking
   - external, environmental affects upon self
   - and by learning how other's respond to oneself
2) A persons experiences with their social as well as physical environment procudes feedback which is then incorporated into the development of self concept
3) that being able to perceive self and recognize characteristics of self has value to the individual.

Let's move on from this point and discuss Outdoor Education, paying particular attention to aspects of Outdoor Education which may contribute to the development of self concept.

To provide a frame of reference, we'll start with a definition. A good working definition would be to say that Outdoor Education is education in and for the out of doors.[14] Outdoor Education makes use of the natural environment as a laboratory and provides opportunities for educational growth through direct experiences and "real" discoveries. Because outdoor education experiences do take place in the out of doors, the individual participant is able to develop an appreciation and

respect for the natural environment based upon his or her personal experiences. Another important aspect of Outdoor Education is that it encourages the acquisition of skills and attitudes necessary for safe, effective and intelligent use of the out of doors. All of this is especially important now as people are turning to the out of doors with increasing frequency in search of recreation and adventure.

Outdoor Education takes many forms. It may be an afternoon spent in woods, or a literal "field trip." It may be a weekend outing or a resident camp experience of a week or longer. An outdoor education resident camp experience may contribute to an individual's growth in unique ways not always available or acceptable in the classroom setting. First, it incorporates the out of doors as a laboratory which demands sensory as well as cognitive exploration. The "sit in your seat" attitude is replaced by "get up and do" opportunities. A geology lesson may involve a mini-excavation in which soil samples are analyzed through not just sight, but touch, taste, and smell as well. Pond studies may be conducted while snacking on cattails. Or you may gather for a botany lesson and notice how a particular low growing tree has three separate leaf formations...and you sip on your sassafras tea while you contemplate that interesting fact.

The resident camp offers a new social experience as well; living with a group of people for a week is vastly different than sitting beside them in class. The camp becomes a mini-community, dependent upon the group working effectively together. Personal interaction is intensified in this community situation.

Effective decision-making becomes a reality. The youngsters can readily experience how their decisions effect their activities and therefore their daily routine. This may help develop the self-respect and self-confidence that comes with determining self direction.

As the topic of Outdoor Education is further analyzed, it becomes apparent that outdoor education incorporates many of the same components involved in developing self-concept. Both outdoor education and self-concept depend upon sensory feedback. Self concept is effected by external events, internal processing and social occurences. Outdoor Education is a combination of external events, internal processing, and social encounters. The question is, despite the close correlation between the two, does an Outdoor Education experience, or more specifically, a resident camp experience, affect the self concept of the participant?

There have been many books and articles written which indicate that Outdoor Education does have an affect on self concept. Many base this finding upon the observations and inference of the observer. Sociograms have also been utilized. Statistical documentation is most commonly found in conjunction with measuring cognitive growth. I wanted to try to obtain empirical documentation of changes in self concept as a result of a o.e. resident camp experience. So, I ended up researching the problem myself, and my study led to some rather interesting results.

This study was conducted in 1978. The subjects of the study were a group of 60 seventh grade students who attended a 5 day outdoor education resident camp. The youngsters were divided into 3 groups of 20 each. These groups were selected from a total of 120 students. The selection was based upon academic ability, student records, and teacher recommendation. The students were then placed so that one group consisted of high academic achievers, one group was comprised of normal achievers and the third group consisted of low academic achievers.

Five days prior to the resident camp experience, a survey was administered to all 120 students. The survey consisted of three instruments, one to measure each of the 3 areas being studied. The instruments included a modification of Coopersmith's Self-Concept Scale from his book, Anticedents of Self-Esteem, and two similar scales developed to measure peer-relationships and student-teacher relationships.

The students then attended a 5 day outdoor education residential program. The major emphasis of this program was environmental awareness, animal habitat, preditor-prey relationships, and group dynamics and socialization. Four days after the experience the survey was re-administered, and the results were tabulated via computer to determine variance in the pre and post tests. The T-test was used to determine significant level of variation.

The results were very interesting. The data obtained from the high achievement group indicated no significant level of change in any of the 3 areas being studied. The data from the

low achievement group also indicated no significant level of variation in any of the 3 areas under study. This was a bit of a surprise because as a result of the readings, this group was anticipated to under-go the greatest change and indicate the most growth, particularly in self-concept. Perhaps the most interesting results of this study was the data obtained from the group of normal achievers. This group indicated a plus .05 level of variation in the area of self-concept and a plus .02 level of variation in student-teacher relationships. Three students in particular indicated phenomenal growth. The mean scores on their pre-test in these two areas were well below those of their peer grouping. The mean post test scores brought them up equal to the mean post-test scores of their peer grouping. Because these 3 students indicated such a large amount of growth, some additional information was obtained to try to learn more about these youngsters and determine why this may have happened. School records were consulted and the teachers were interviewed. It was learned that these 3 youngsters were considered to be very "normal", "average", students. They behaved themselves in class, thereby not drawing any attention to themselves in that respect. Their school work was not exceptional, so no additional attention was given to them in that respect, either. They evidently came to school, sat in their seat, did their work, and went home. And yet, when these same 3 students spent only 5 days in an out door education setting, something good happended. They came home feeling better about themselves. The only apparent variable interjected

into their daily school routine during those 14 days that elapsed between the pre and post administration of the survey was the outdoor education resident camp experience. It therefore seems safe to conclude that it was the outdoor education experience which effected the change.[5]

The results of this study did not contradict the observations documented in previous studies. This study merely elaborates upon previous studies. Perhaps the change of behavior observed in the deviant youngsters was so radical, that it dominated the observers attention. Whereas, the change that occured within the "quiet", "average" youngster would have been much more subtle, and therefore, more difficult to perceive.

Education in, of, and for the out of doors does seem to make a major contribution to self-concept. Organizations which promote and develop out door adventure programs have relied on this for years. That is, they have relied upon people emerging from the experience, feeling very good about themselves and what they accomplished, despite any hardship or inconvenience they they may have suffered.

The word "adventure" itself fits easily into the outdoor education concept. Webster's Seventh Collegiate dictionary offers several definitions, among them, their 3rd, which defines adventure as "a remarkable experience". For most youngsters, outdoor education is indeed "a remarkable experience".

Adventure programs combine the remarkable experience of outdoor education with Webster's 2nd definition of adventure, "an encountering of risks". The element of risk is what transforms the traditionally perceived outdoor education

program into an outdoor adventure program. Adventure programming could be considered a "spin-off" of outdoor education. Fundamentally, they share the same definition; education in, of, and for the out of doors. They both rely upon sensory exploration as well as the cognitive process for problem solving and decision-making. Both utilize socialization and group dynamics as a part and parcel of the total experience. Adventure programming is a more rigorous form of out door education. And it too has proven itself to be an effective catalyst for enhansing self concept. So much so, that various institutions and organizations have relied upon out door adventure programs as a form of therapy for reversing deviant behaviors or promoting the development of desired behaviors.

Massachussetts Department of Youth Services placed 5 adjudicated delinquent boys in a summer camp in Colorado in 1964. That "summer camp" turned out to be the Colorado Outward Bound School. This accidental placement produced some surprising results. The group as a whole did very well. One of the youngsters was asked to remain as an assistant patrol leader. All of the boys returned exhilerated by their experience. The feature which most impressed those who met the boys, was their attitude about themselves and their future. As a result of the initial groups experience, the Massachussetts Dept. of Youth Services sent 40 boys to the Colorado Outward Bound School in 1965. Once again, the youth returned full of pride and very enthusiastic about their experience. A six month study was administered to determine recidivism rate of these 40 youth.

Only 4 recidivated as opposed to the traditional expectancy rate of 15-16. This was a very impressive finding. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that these 1st 45 youth were very carefully selected. In 1966, a controlled study was initiated which involved two randomly selected groups of adolescent delinquents. Each group contained 60 youth. One group attended Outward Bound and the other group was treated in the routine manner of the Dept. of Youth Services, which included parole, private placement or placement in a training school. The difference in recitivism rate between the two groups would be the factor used to determine success. After one year, a follow-up study indicated that among the youth who attended the 27 day Outward Bound Course, there was a recidivism rate of 20%. However, the recidivism rate of the control group was 42%. Although it was determined that Outward Bound did not work equally well for all youth, the predominant results of the study indicated that Outward Bound was an effective alternative to the traditional training school program. This finding, compounded with the economical benefits of a month long Outward Bound course as compared to a 9-12 month expenditure for an institutionalized youth, prompted the development of Homeward Bound.[11]

Homeward Bound was developed by the Mass. Dept. of Youth Services. It was modeled after the Outward Bound curriculum. Homeward Bound was developed and impliment as a result of the success experienced by delinquent youth through Outward Bound programs. This adventure-based out door education program proved itself to be an effective means by which a delinquent

youth could acquire a feeling of pride and gain a new self-respect. Once again, an outdoor education program served as a catalyst for developing a positive self-concept.

Outward Bound and Homeward Bound are just two organizations or agencies that have been successful in their use of the out of doors as an alternative to traditional treatment programs for delinquent youth. Others include the State of Pennsylvania which has utilized the Encounter Four Program as treatment for substance abusers. This program is serviced out of Butler County Community College.[3] Michigan had a similar program called Michigan Expeditions. This program serviced adjudicated delinquents. The Ohio Youth Commission utilized a Wilderness Skills program serviced through Ohio University.

Outdoor education based programs have been demonstrated as being successful in developing the self-concept of school children attending outdoor education resident camps as well as providing effective alternatives for delinquent youth. Other unique groups have also made use of the out of doors as a catalyst for self growth and group awareness. These groups are comprised of adults.

A growing number of business corporations have utilized out door adventure programs as a method for developing leadership and self confidence in their management personnel. Among them are the Adolph Coor's Company, Eastman Kodak, IBM, Ralston Purina, and Shell Oil. These companies believed so strongly in this approach that in most cases they covered all the expenses of their employees.[1]

Using outdoor adventure programs as a management development tool began in Britain with companies like Shell, Unilever, Imperial Chemical Industry and British Petroleum. The idea spread to the United States in 1968. By 1969, management courses were in full operation in the Colorado and North Carolina Outward Bound Schools.[1]

Perhaps further insight into the success of this concept can best be obtained through a quote from a man who, in 1971, was president of Jewel Box Stores Incorporated. He said,

> "We've never lost a manager because he was lacking in either knowledge or experience. Managers fail because they lack self-confidence, desire, and determination to succeed despite obstacles, competition, and monetary set-backs. We look to Outward Bound to install in our future managers the training we can't foster in regular training, maturity, character, confidence, the will to succeed, and an addition to excellence."[2]

Outward Bound is not the only organization servicing this unique population. Others include Encounter 4, out of Butler County Community College in Pennsylvania.

Adults of all walks of life are turning to outdoor adventure programs to revitalize and challenge themselves. Organizations like Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School, and Encounter 4 have developed special courses which are designed to service the adult population. These courses are designed to serve a variety of needs - they include the courses for executives, women's groups, and co-ed grouplings of adults from a variety of backgrounds. Most of these people share common goals when they attend these courses. They're hoping to gain self-confidence. Many are in a transitional stage in their lives and are looking for direction. Most are looking

forward to the challenge and welcome the opportunity to experience the out of doors first hand.

These adult courses have proven to ve very successful. Not only for the economic benefits obtained by the organization providing the service, but most importantly, the majority of the participants have found the experience to be very worthwhile.

People, all people, need opportunities to take part in an adventure. People do seem to benefit from being a participant in a remarkable experience. Outdoor education and outdoor adventure education programs provide many opportunities for people to share in a remarkable experience. People of all ages are forced into decision making and problem solving situations. They are challenged mentally, physically, emotionally and socially, in a unique setting, the out-of-doors. Self-confidence can and often does, receive a tremendous boost and a positive self-concept is fostered and developed through this remarkable experience.

The opportunities provided through Outdoor Education and Outdoor Adventure Education programs are special and unique to todays over organized society. Freedom of choice is continually and systematically being policed and standardized right out of existance. Company policy eliminates many opportunities for the employees to feel that they have a part in any kind of creative decision making. State regulations effect everything from when and where a person can purchase certain products to whether or not they must wear a motorcycle helmet.

Governmental regulations effect everything from what medical treatment may be obtained to how many miles our cars should get to a gallon of gas and what cars are available for us to purchase. Automobile Safety Standards have been refined to the point that some cars put our seat belts on for us.

Some jobs have become so monotonous that workers seek outside stimulation on a regular basis - either through chronic absenteeism or drugs. This in turn poses real problems to the company as well as the worker. Creative self expression, effective decision-making, even communication has been eliminated from many forms of employment. The self is lost. Automation is king, and the people must conform to the standards and formats dictated to them by the all knowing, never infallable, computor. No wonder more and more people are escaping into the out of doors, where once again responsible decision-making is paramount to existance. Where the self once again becomes important, where reality isn't contrived, rain is rain is rain!!

As more people of all ages turn to the out of doors for any number of reasons, it becomes increasingly clear that out door education is vital. Not only for the well being of the individual, but for the well being of the environment. People must be taught to respect the environment, to develop an appreciation for the out of doors so that they may explore it and exhilerate in it in a safe and effective manner and so that it, the environment, will also remain safe and unsullied for still others to experience.

In Summary:

The out of doors provides many exciting opportunities to all people of all ages. Through outdoor education, a youngster

can experience intellectual as well as physical growth, but most importantly they can develop a more positive self concept.

Special populations such as adjudicated delinquent youth have also benefited through the use of the out of doors. Once again, the growth experienced involved self-concept. The change observed and the results obtained through the use of the out of doors as a therapy medium has been so successful in reducing recititivism rates that a number of state youth service departments have incorporated outdoor education adventure programming as an effective alternative to traditional treatment methods.

Corporations are turning to outdoor education adventure programming as a method of management development training. These corporations have discovered that the out of door experience offers opportunities for developing leadership, decision-making, and group awareness that can't be matched in traditional management training.

Adults from all walks of life have turned to the out of doors as a means for gaining self-confidence or to obtain a form of self-renewal. They look to the out of doors to regain a feeling of self. Freedom of choice, opportunities to confront reality and creative problem solving all are attractive features of the outdoor experience.

Outdoor education is important. It plays a vital part in enabling people to grow and develop positive self concepts and self confidence. Outdoor education also plays a vital part in enabling people to travel through the out of doors in a safe and effective manner. Safe both for the people passing through and

safe for the environment, so that it won't be destroyed and can continue to be utilized by others. So that they too may use the environment as a catalyst for self renewal and self growth.

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